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**CHANGING GOAL  
TO ADOPTION**

A child's permanency goal cannot be changed to adoption unless one of the following occurs:

- Parental rights of both parents are terminated and the written order of termination has been received by the worker.
- A judge orders the permanency goal changed to adoption, prior to any order terminating parental rights.

**GOAL CHANGE TO  
ADOPTION PRIOR  
TO TERMINATION  
OF ALL PARENTAL  
RIGHTS**

The case cannot be referred for adoption service and the foster care worker cannot send the adoption referral packet until all parental rights are terminated. The foster care worker must begin the adoption preparation case work by:

- Gathering all required information for the adoption referral packet.
- Determining whether the current caregivers or relatives wish to adopt the child.
- Identifying Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) cases and coordinating with the tribe as appropriate.
- Identifying and locating adoptive parents of siblings to assess their interest in adopting the child.
- Determining the need for an Interstate Compact on Placement of Children (ICPC) referral.
- Collecting any family assessments, relative home studies, and/or licensing studies on all interested families.
- Referring all interested parties for licensing and/or training as indicated.

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## REFERRAL TO ADOPTION FOLLOWING TERMINATION

All foster children available for adoption, with adoption as their permanency goal, must be referred for adoption services. Foster children become available for adoption once the parental rights of both parents are terminated. For American Indian/Alaska Native children, see Native American Affairs Policy, NAA 400, Indian Child Adoptions.

Adoption referrals are initiated by MDHHS. A child placing agency may not transfer adoption cases to another child placing agency. After acceptance of an adoption referral, the agency may not transfer the case back to MDHHS, except upon the written approval of the county director, the children's services agency executive director or deputy director.

## NOTIFICATION FROM FOSTER CARE

### Referral Packet

The foster care worker must provide a referral packet which contains the following documents to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) or contracted adoption agency adoption worker, within 5 working days from the date of the receipt of the order terminating parental rights:

- The DHS-441, Initial Service Plan (ISP).
- The last two DHS-441, Updated Service Plans (USP).

**Note:** All service plans (USP/Permanent Ward Service Plans (PWSP)) that are written after the adoption referral must also be sent to the adoption worker.

- All of the child's and biological parents' physical, dental, medical, and psychological/psychiatric records and assessments, and the child's medical passport. A summary of the findings of the records must be included in the adoptive child assessment; see SRM 131, Confidentiality. The biological parents' records **must not be released** to the adoptive family.

- School records, including Individual Education Planning Committee (IEPC) reports.
- Early On reports and any other developmental assessments.
- Child's original birth certificate. If not available, a copy of the application for the child's original birth certificate must be provided.
- The child's Social Security card or verification of Social Security number; see FOM 902-16, Social Security Numbers.
- Child's placement history.
- Copy of the current (dated within the last six months) Assessment for Determination of Care (DOC) for Children in Foster Care (DHS-470, 470A or 1945) and any documentation, in addition to the case service plans, that supports the scoring of the DOC must be attached to the DOC assessment.
- Copies of release/termination documents and court orders.
- All court petitions for the case (initial, amended and supplemental).
- DHS-352, Initial Determination of Appropriate Foster Care Funding Source.
- DHS-990, Relative Notification Letter.
- DHS-989, Relative Response.
- DHS-988, Relative Search Information.
- DHS-987, Relative Documentation.
- Death certificate of parent(s) (if applicable).

The following additional documents must be submitted with the adoption referral packet for all American Indian/Alaska Native children:

- Documentation of tribal consultation.
- Documentation of the tribe's recommendation.

Regardless, if materials are missing or not available, an incomplete referral packet must be sent within the time frames stated.

Incomplete referral packets must be completed within 30 calendar days of sending the initial packet to the adoption worker. If a complete referral packet is not received by the adoption worker within 30 calendar days, the adoption supervisor must contact the foster care supervisor to request the missing information. The assigned adoption worker must proceed with adoption planning and must coordinate efforts with foster care to ensure that services are provided and permanency achieved.

The foster care worker must also provide the following if available and/or applicable:

- A copy of any relative or unrelated caregiver assessment (DHS- 197).
- DHS-588, Initial Relative Safety Screen.
- Genogram.
- Pictures of child and other family members.
- CPS complaints, records or documents; see SRM 131 regarding information that must be redacted prior to sending this information to a contracted adoption agency.
- A copy of the BCAL-3130, Initial Foster Home/Adoptive Evaluation, if the foster parent/relative is interested in adopting the child(ren).
- Foster home licensing/Children's Protective Services (CPS) accepted and rejected complaints, investigation and disposition reports and any resulting corrective action plans.

## **CASE ACCEPTANCE AND ASSIGNMENT**

Within seven working days of receipt of the adoption referral from MDHHS , the child placing agency must accept or decline the adoption referral. Rejection of a referral may include a detailed explanation of the reason for rejection in MISACWIS. If the referral is accepted, the adoption supervisor must assign the case to an adoption worker within three working days to initiate the DHS-1927, Child Adoption Assessment and identify or recruit a qualified family for adoption.

**REQUIRED  
ADOPTION  
FOCUSED  
ACTIVITIES**

Within three working days of the acceptance of the adoption case transfer, an adoption caseworker must be assigned. Adoption activities must begin. These activities include:

- Determination of whether the current foster parent(s) or relative(s) with whom the child is currently placed intend to adopt the child. The DHS-4809, Intent to Adopt, is used for this purpose. If the signed DHS-4809 is not in the case record, the adoption worker must obtain the signed form within 14 working days of assignment.
- Submit the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE) registration and a copy of the DHS-4809 to MARE within 30 calendar days of acceptance of the case for all children who have an identified adoptive family.
- Complete a written, child-specific plan to recruit an adoptive family for all children without an identified adoptive family. Submit the plan and the MARE registration for photo listing to MARE within 30 calendar days of the acceptance of the adoption case.
- Initiate evaluation of the prospective adoptive home (if not a licensed foster care provider) within seven calendar days of the acceptance date of the referral or identification of the prospective adoptive family, whichever is later. The evaluation is based on the BCAL-3130, Initial Foster Home/Adoption Evaluation and DHS-612, Adoptive Family Assessment Addendum. The evaluation must be completed within 90 calendar days of the acceptance date of the referral or identification of the prospective adoptive family, whichever is later.

Documentation of the completion of the above requirements must be maintained in the child's adoption record.

**Initial Case Review**

When a referral from foster care is made to the adoption unit, a meeting between the foster care and adoption worker must be held to discuss child history, case information and adoption planning

options. This review must be held within 30 calendar days of the receipt of the adoption referral and must be documented in MiSACWIS. This review must include a discussion of health or age concerns for potential adoptive parents specifically, if the youngest child to be adopted is less than 10 years of age and there is more than a 50 year age difference between the child and the youngest prospective adoptive parent; see ADM 0510. Input from the Michigan Children's Institute (MCI) office and the child's attorney may be obtained. Case reviews must be held between the foster care worker and the assigned adoption worker on a quarterly basis following the initial case review. For children without an identified family refer to ADM 0400 for required recruitment activities.

### **ADOPTION NOT IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CHILD**

If the adoption worker and supervisor determine that the goal of adoption is not in the best interest of the child after reviewing the case record and meeting with the child and the foster care worker, the reasons must be documented in the child's case record. Decisions concerning a change in the permanency goal require a family team meeting (FTM).

No child should have a determination that adoption is not an appropriate goal based solely on age or special needs. Specialized recruitment is the appropriate action when a child has needs that require a specific type of home. Specialized recruitment activities include holding case reviews for children who are legally free for adoption for more than three months but do not have a permanent placement identified; see ADM 0400 for case review requirements.

If it is determined that adoption is not in the best interest of the child, the DHS-222, Adoption Closing Summary, must be sent to the foster care worker (or MDHHS monitor and PAFC worker for contracted adoption agency cases) along with all other adoption-specific reports.

### **TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS APPEALS**

An appeal of a court order terminating parental rights may delay adoption finalization but must not delay an adoptive placement. Appeals must not delay referrals to the adoption supervisor.

**COORDINATION OF  
ADOPTION  
PLANNING  
SERVICES**

Coordination of adoption planning services must be part of the concurrent planning process. Preparation of the child for an adoptive placement must include joint planning between foster care and adoption staff. Until the child is placed for adoption by the court, the foster care worker is the child's primary worker and the adoption worker is the secondary worker. During this time, the adoption worker must provide the foster care worker with the DHS-1927, Child Adoption Assessment, and the DHS-614, Quarterly Adoption Progress Reports; see ADM 0300, Child Adoption Assessment and ADM 0330, Quarterly Adoption Progress Reports.